

**For Immediate Release:**

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## **Senator Brooks and Long Island Senate Majority Members Introduce “Gold Star” Bill in Senate**

**Lindenhurst, NY** - Today, Senator John E. Brooks, joined by members of the Long Island Democratic Majority and members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), announced the introduction of [Senate Bill S.5187](#). Also known as the “Gold Star” bill, this legislation will provide free tuition expenses for dependent family members of New York military personnel who as a result of their official duties has lost their lives, become permanently disabled, or classified as Missing in Action. Senator Brooks, Chair of the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security And Military Affairs Committee, has been an outspoken advocate for veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

“Our heroic servicemembers who fall in the line of duty and make the ultimate sacrifice to protect our nation are owed a debt of gratitude that can never truly be repaid,” **Senator John E. Brooks** said. “That is why I am proud to sponsor legislation that will ensure their children are provided free tuition for all SUNY and CUNY schools. I will continue to work with my colleagues in State government to have this important legislation passed into law.”

**Gene Ratigliano, State Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States**, said “The Veterans of Foreign Wars is very grateful to Senator Brooks for the support of this bill to provide educational benefits to the family survivors of our fallen comrades who gave the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our freedoms. This bill is especially important for those young military members who have young families and are usually at the lower end of the pay scale thus providing their survivors the opportunity to seek college educational opportunities they would otherwise be unable to secure. Passage of this bill will not only open the doors to educational opportunities for the military survivors but make those utilizing these benefits be better citizens enabling them to also better their communities in which they live.”

The legislation advanced by Senator John Brooks, and already co-sponsored by a bi-partisan group of Senators, takes into account the concerns raised by the VFW for the need to define “official duties.” Additionally, the effective date is changed to April 1, 2020 (rather than immediately) to allow the state to appropriate funds in the FY21 budget for the support of this measure. For more information about Senator Brooks’ legislation, please visit: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/s5187>.

**Senator Todd Kaminsky** said, “Our American freedoms are made possible thanks to the soldiers and their families who have sacrificed on our behalf. New York owes them more than a debt of gratitude and must dedicate its resources to help these families have every opportunity possible as they move forward.”

**Senator Anna M. Kaplan** said, “Our nation and our state owe a significant debt of gratitude to those who make the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our nation, protecting our dearly held

freedoms. Extending the opportunity for children and spouses of our fallen heroes to attend college without financial burden is a small gesture of thanks on behalf of a grateful community that we can all support.”

**Senator Kevin Thomas** said, “We have a responsibility to care for the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of our country. I stand with my Senate colleagues in supporting legislation that will provide free tuition expenses to surviving family members of military personnel who have died in the line of duty. Our service members deserve to know that their families will have access to the opportunity and promise they defend every day.”

**Senator Monica Martinez** said, “As an Aunt of a nephew in the Air Force, and a member of the Veterans Homeland Security, and Military Affairs Committee, I am dedicated to enacting policies that support our armed forces and their families. It is our duty as policy makers to prioritize protecting and honoring those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation.”

**Senator James Gaughran** said, “It is our duty to ensure that the dependents of those who serve our country with distinction, including those who make the ultimate sacrifice, are supported and taken care of. This bill will ensure that these dependents are provided every chance to succeed in the future, starting with a high quality education. I look forward to timely passage of this important legislation.”

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